

Portland Area Technical Support Issues, Recommendations and ITSC Response:

Issue # 1: PCC+ technical support contracts lapsed

The technical support contracts for PCC+ expired in October. Two of the Portland Area facilities have been utilizing PCC+ in full production mode to print customized encounter forms. In order to maintain continued support, one of these facilities (PTHA) purchased a support contract directly from the vendor (\$3500).

Portland Area Recommendations for Issue #1

1. *Plan ahead for the support contracts. Don't let this lapse. Maintain annual schedules to renew these in advance. Support issues should be seamless to the end users. We should call the ITSC help desk.*
2. *Train permanent ITSC support staff prior to releasing new technologies. PCC+ has been totally out-sourced and we are lacking in-house resources to support this because the contracts have been in extended negotiation.*

ITSC Response to #1

Russ Pittman stated ITSC has an annual schedule in place for renewing support contracts. He reiterated the requirement to call the ITSC support desk for assistance on any packages, including PCC+. There is only one vendor available to provide complete technical support and ITSC was still waiting for a support contract.

Issue #2: Network access terminated for tribal support contractors

In December, network access was terminated for support contractors without any notice sent to the Area or Sites. Access has been removed to these companies because the contract has expired at the Headquarters level. Many of the Portland Area Tribal sites have contracted with these vendors to support the billing packages. Puyallup will not be able to bill pharmacy until access is granted and the Siletz clinic has been adversely affected.

Portland Area Recommendations for Issue #2:

1. *Develop annual schedules to review access forms, and provide information to Areas and Facilities.*
2. *In the event that there are anticipated access issues, notify the stakeholders in advance and find out who is using these services and verify that we can continue to provide patient and billing services while they are working out the issues.*

ITSC Response to #2

Russ apologized for any inconvenience and said his folks were working on a better way to provide network access for vendors while maintaining a secure IHS WAN.

Issue #3: ITSC suspends support of RPMS conversions to Windows 2000.

On November 30th, the ITSC announced that they would suspend support of RPMS conversions to Windows 2000. The Portland Area had 2 sites scheduled for installation during the month of December. A Service Unit which has been experiencing hardware problems for the past 2 months, running a RISC 580 and a Tribal site which is running on a P-133. It is imperative that we continue our conversions. We selected Windows 2000 servers at the recommendation of ITSC and because this is the DIRECTION of IHS. We were told to convert to get ready for CACHE.

One of the reasons that the ITSC suspended support was because the protocol used to interface with lab instruments is not supported. We were able to work through this issue at Puyallup. Without notice, a Tribal site was told they could not be assisted with implementation of the Lab interface. This Tribal site planned and scheduled with the contractor 2 months in advance for the Lab implementation. They were told it was because they were running a W2K server ITSC would not be able to assist.

Another larger issue is that the MSM vendor (Intersystem) has not certified MSM to run on Windows 2000. MSM may run correctly but the vendor will not provide Operating system support or add additional functionality to the system.

Portland Area Recommendations for Issue #3:

1. *Regarding Support issues that affect the Area Offices and facilities, discussion with the Area ISCs and ITSC staff to evaluate the impact of these decisions.*
2. *Do not recommend a platform until it has been thoroughly evaluated for compatibility, and is fully supported by the vendor. Ensure that ITSC staff can provide operating system support if the vendor cannot.*

ITSC Response to #3

Russ again apologized for any inconvenience and said his folks were working on a better way to make recommendations for vendors and hardware platforms. He also made the point that depending on whom you asked within ITSC you could receive any of three answers for what platform to use. IBM RISC 6000 platforms, Windows 2000 Server or Linux Servers are all being advocated, according to Russ.